

## cheap chic



Joseph Joseph's glass "cook" worktop saver can be used as a heat-resistant trivet or an odour- and stain-resistant chopping board. Plus, it brightens up any meal. What better way to show your love for your kitchen? £13, www.amazon.co.uk

property insider off the market

# From city to suburbs for peace and quiet

## Property rented

A one-bedroom apartment in a new, three-storey villa divided into about eight apartments "Between the Bridges" in Abu Dhabi. Rented from June 1, 2010.

## Price

Dh60,000 per annum.

## Key features

Ground floor, one bedroom, living room, kitchen, shower room, use of communal garden and a small, front garden, gym (yet to be completed, despite numerous promises it will "be finished soon, insh'Allah").

## The hunt

It was the first place I had looked at and my motto has always been "get in quick before it's too late; you may never get another chance". I was told about the villa by a friend, called the telephone number advertised on the front wall of the house and, after a quick look – a whole 10 minutes or so – I took it.

## The result

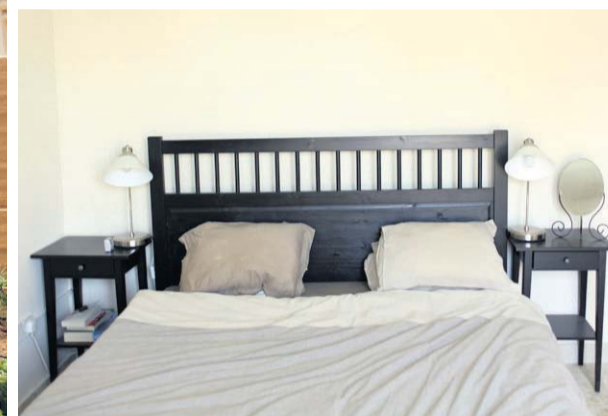
I had been sharing a two-bedroom, second-floor apartment in Tanka Mayiah (just ask any taxi driver, he'll tell you where) and, after two years there, I really had to move. It wasn't that Tanka Mayiah was the worst place in the world. I was born and bred in East London and had to share a tin bath in the kitchen with my dad, mum and sister and, being the youngest, had last use of the water. It was just that every evening for hours on end I had to endure toots of car horns, people shouting and a dustbin cart that arrived at 2.30am with one particular dustman

singing merrily away – don't you just love a man happy in his work.

My only reservation about moving from there was that Tanka Mayiah is just a short taxi ride from the very centre of the city, so I could enjoy a night out and be home within minutes. But I knew that living in the suburbs was a good deal cheaper than being near the centre. And now I can hear birds singing. Sonnets drift in through my windows. I'm hoping soon to look out at a bird bath, which I will have placed on my little bit of garden immediately in front of my bedroom window so that I can see birds splashing about (if you know anywhere in Abu Dhabi where I can find one please e-mail me).

The journey to work is 15 minutes max and, believe me, at this time of the year, indeed most times of the year in the UAE, that trip in an air conditioned car is far more comfortable than the short walk on un-air conditioned legs that I endured when in Tanka Mayiah.

Furniture was easy. I thought a new home deserved new furniture so I drove to Ikea at Marina Mall, walked around for 20 minutes or so with a sawn-off pencil, then waited a few days before everything was delivered and put together. Chuck in a new rug or two and there you go. Sorted, a new home, a new life. And telling the delivery men your location is a breeze – turn right at the BMW garage, keep straight and my place is on the left; can't miss it. I have hung paintings of my border terrier dogs on the wall to remind me of England and I bought a huge picture, from Ikea, of a red London bus on Oxford Street – which, I hasten to add, complements my red Ikea sofa perfectly.



Clockwise from above: a communal garden is included; new furniture for a new home; with less noise, Charles Whebell can rest easy. Rich-Joseph Facun / The National

## Love it

Being in the suburbs off the island, within a few hundred metres of several world-class hotels, a short walk from a beach, a two-minute drive from a large supermarket and a row of "village shops", is wonderful. And to hear peace and quiet – yes you really can hear peace and quiet; it's a sound to behold. And all this for the same price I was paying for my share of the previous apartment.

## Loathe it

Like everybody, I sigh deeply when I hear "insh'Allah" in the context of: "We will repair that awful looking air conditioning grid for you tomorrow, insh'Allah." "We will put a shower door on for you soon, insh'Allah." But I tend to smile at it now. Hence, there are a few jobs yet to be finished and promises yet to be carried out. But at least the air conditioning works. My biggest gripe is that there are not enough electrical

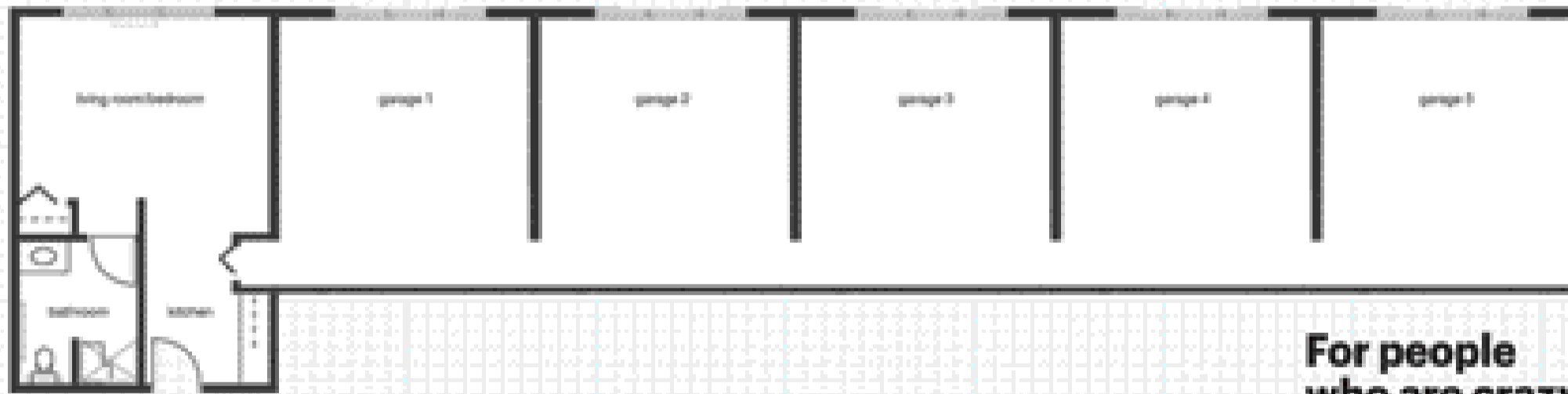
points, meaning that I have had to buy numerous extension leads.

## Verdict

I had heard horror stories of people attempting to move and, being on the brink of clinching their dream apart by unscrupulous agents, so I suppose I was quite lucky. Everything went through quickly and although none of the little jobs I wanted done have been done, I know that they will be eventually –

insh'Allah. For the first week in my new home I could not sleep. I lay in bed wondering where the car horns were, where the shouting was. And I actually found myself missing the dustman's songs. But now I love the peace and quiet. I have my own parking place and, if I ever need a taxi, I just walk across the road to one of the hotels. All in all, it has been a wise move.

★ Charles Whebell  
✉ cwhebell@thenational.ae



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